

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 SCCT-01 SY-05 L-03 EURE-00 SSO-00

NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 USSS-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

EB-07 FAA-00 DOTE-00 SCA-01 IO-13 SAM-01 OMB-01 /092 W

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O R 161114Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4605

INFO AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

AMCONSUL IZMIR

AMCONSUL ADANA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 6273

DEPT PASS BEIRUT AT DISCRETION

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, ASEC, TU

SUBJECT: EXTRADITION OF ISTANBUL AIRPORT TERRORISTS

1. TURK MINISTER OF INTERIOR ASILTURK HAS BEEN QUOTED IN THE TURKISH PRESS (AND IN SOME FOREIGN NEWSPAPERS AS WELL) AS MAKING STATEMENTS REFLECTING SUPPORT FOR THE EXTRADITION OF THE PALESTINIAN TERRORISTS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ATTACK AT ISTANBUL AIRPORT IN WHICH HAROLD ROSENTHAL, STAFF AIDE TO SENATOR JAVITS, WAS KILLED TOGETHER WITH THREE OTHER PERSONS. SPECIFICALLY, ASILTURK REPORTEDLY TOLD THE PRESS ON AUGUST 12 THAT "IF ANY OF THE COUNTRIES HAVING AN EXTRADITION TREATY WITH TURKEY SO REQUESTS, THE TERRORISTS COULD BE EXTRADITED." SECONDLY, ASILTURK WAS QUOTED AS SAYING ON AUG. 13: "WE WANT TO STAY OUT OF THIS MATTER. WE COULD EXTRADITE THEM TO ANY COUNTRY THAT MAY WANT THEM. PERSONALLY, I AM IN FAVOR OF THE EXTRADITION OF THE TWO PALESTINIANS. BUT THE LEGAL ASPECT OF THE MATTER SHOULD NOT BE OVERLOOKED. EVERYTHING WILL TAKE PLACE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE LAW. WE COULD EXTRADITE THE TWO PALESTINIANS

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AT ANY MOMENT." AGAIN, ASILTURK REPORTEDLY TOLD THE PRESS ON

AUG. 14 THAT THE TERRORISTS' CITIZENSHIP WAS LEBANESE, THAT TURKEY DID NOT HAVE EXTRADITION AGREEMENTS WITH ANY ARAB COUNTRY EXCEPT LEBANON AND THAT "IF LEBANON WANTS THEM AND IF IT FULFILLS THE LEGAL CONDITIONS, THE TERRORISTS COULD ONLY BE EXTRADITED TO LEBANON."

2. ON BASIS FOR FOREGOING, I CALLED ON MFA SEC GEN ELEKDAG MONDAY MORNING, AUG. 16. I EXPRESSED HOPE THAT THERE WAS NOTHING BEHIND THESE STORIES, NOTING THAT EXTRADITION OF THE TERRORISTS WHO HAD MURDERED AN AMERICAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL TO AN ARAB COUNTRY UNDER THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD BE TANTAMOUNT TO LETTING THEM GO UNPUNISHED. I ALSO WONDERED WHAT THE JURISDICTION IN AN ARAB COUNTRY WOULD BE WHEN THE CRIME HAD NOT TAKEN PLACE IN THAT COUNTRY AND WHEN NO ARAB CITIZEN HAD BEEN HURT. AN EXTRADITION ACTION, I POINTED OUT, WOULD SERVE NOTICE TO ARAB TERRORISTS THAT THEY COULD COMMIT THEIR ACTS IN TURKEY IN THE FUTURE WITH CONSIDERABLE IMPUNITY. AT THE SAME TIME SUCH AN ACTION ON TURKEY'S PART WOULD BE A DISTINCT BLOW TO THE WORLDWIDE EFFORT TO COMBAT TERRORISM--A SCOURGE FROM WHICH TURKEY, LIKE THE US, HAD ALREADY MORE THAN SUFFERED ITS SHARE. FINALLY, I NOTED THAT IT HAD BEEN A CONGRESSIONAL EMPLOYEE WHO HAD BEEN KILLED AND THE NEGATIVE EFFECT VIS-A-VIS CONGRESSIONAL ACTION ON THE NEW DEFENSE COOPERATION AGREEMENT COULD BE VERY SERIOUS. ELEKDAG IMMEDIATELY RESPONDED THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO GOVERNMENT DECISION AND THAT MINISTER OF INTERIOR ASILTURK "AND THE MEMBERS OF HIS PARTY WHO HAVE PUBLICLY SUPPORTED HIS VIEW" ARE NOT REPEAT NOT IN A POSITION TO SPEAK FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

3. ELEKDAG THEN SAID THAT EXTRADITION COULD NOT TAKE PLACE WITHOUT A CABINET DECISION AND HE ADDED THAT IN HIS PERSONAL VIEW SUCH AN ACTION WOULD BE AN "ABERRATION" IN TURKEY'S POLICY. HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE WAS PERSONALLY STRONGLY OPPOSED TO EXTRADITION, AND HE REVIEWED MY STATEMENT WITH ME IN ORDER, HE SAID, TO HAVE MY POINTS CLEARLY IN MIND WHEN HE RELAYED THEM TO THE PRIME MINISTER.

4. I NEXT ASKED WHETHER ELEKDAG FOUND IT SURPRISING THAT THE GOT HAD NOT "CONDEMNED" THE TERRORISTS' ACTION. (THE ISRAELI AMBASSADOR HERE HAS BEEN VERY DISTURBED ABOUT THIS AND HAS TAKEN IT UP OFFICIALLY WITH THE GOT.) ELEKDAG SAID THAT AFTER A CABINET MEETING, THE PRIMIN HAD SAID HE DEEPLY REGRETTED THE INCIDENT.
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ELEKDAG IMPLIED THAT THERE WAS NOT A GREAT DEAL OF DISTINCTION BETWEEN "REGRETTING" AND "CONDEMNING."

5. FINALLY, I ASKED ELEKDAG WHETHER HE THOUGHT THE TERRORISTS' ACTION WOULD HAVE ANY EFFECT IN DELAYING THE OPENING OF THE PLO OFFICE IN ANKARA. HIS RESPONSE WAS THAT THE PLO HAD SO MANY OTHER CONCERNS RECENTLY THAT THEY HAD NOT PURSUED THIS MATTER WITH THE TURKS

AND SPECIFICALLY HAD NOT MOVED AHEAD LAST JUNE (WHICH WAS WHEN THE TURKS HAD EXPECTED A PLO REPRESENTATIVE TO COME HERE TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS

FOR THE OPENING OF THE OFFICE.) ELEKDAG SAID HE THOUGHT THAT THE PLO CONTINUED TO BE SUFFICIENTLY PREOCCUPIED THAT THE ISSUE WAS NOT LIKELY TO COME UP FOR A WHILE. HE ALSO SAID THAT THE ISTANBUL TERRORISTS HAD ADMITTED TO BEING MEMBERS OF THE GEORGE HABASH GROUP WHICH THE PLO DID NOT COMPLETELY CONTROL. HOWEVER, HE ADDED, "WE ARE NOW MAKING DIRECT INQUIRIES TO THE PLO CONCERNING THIS INCIDENT".

6. COMMENT: ERBAKAN'S PRO-MOSLEM NATIONAL SALVATION PARTY, OF WHICH MINISTER ASILTURK IS A MEMBER, MAY PROVE A SOURCE OF EMBARRASSMENT TO THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT ON THE EXTRADITION ISSUE. ASILTURK'S POSITION MAY ALSO RECEIVE SOME SUPPORT FROM OTHERS WITHIN THE GOT WHO HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN PURSUING A "COURTING-OF-THE-ARABS POLICY" IN AN EFFORT TO PROVIDE TURKEY WITH MORE SUBSTANTIAL VOTING STRENGTH IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS. STILL OTHERS WILL BE WORRIED --IF THE TERRORISTS ARE NOT RELEASED--BY THE POSSIBILITY OF TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS KIDNAPPING TURK HOSTAGES IN AN EFFORT TO SPRING THE TWO PALESTINIANS NOW IMPRISONED IN ISTANBUL. ON THE OTHER HAND, KOWTOWING TO TERRORISTS IS UN-TURK-LIKE. IT IS ALSO CONTRARY TO ESTABLISHED GOT POLICY AND IT WOULD BE ESPECIALLY UNPOPULAR HERE IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE MURDERS OF THREE TURK DIPLOMATS (TWO AMBASSADORS AND A FIRST SECRETARY) IN THE PAST YEAR.

7. THERE IS A CABINET MEETING IN ISTANBUL TOMORROW WHICH ELEKDAG IS ATTENDING, AND IT THEREFORE SEEMED TO ME IMPORTANT TO WEIGH IN WITH A STRONG USG DEMARCHE WITHOUT DELAY. AT ONE POINT, WHEN ELEKDAG WAS SUMMARIZING MY POINTS FOR HIS PRESENTATION TO THE PRIME MINISTER, HE SAID HE ASSUMED I WAS SPEAKING ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM MY GOVERNMENT. I SAID THAT THERE HAD NOT BEEN TIME TO GET USG INSTRUCTIONS, THAT I MOVED SO PROMPTLY BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE I KNEW--WITHOUT WAITING FOR INSTRUCTIONS--THE USG ATTACHED TO SUCH MATTERS. I EMPHASIZED, CONFIDENTIAL

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HOWEVER, THAT HE COULD BE ASSURED THAT WHAT I HAD SAID WAS IN FACT THE USG OFFICIAL VIEWS.

8. I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR DEPARTMENT TO AUTHORIZE ME TO CONFIRM TO ELEKDAG THAT I WAS EXPRESSING OFFICIAL USG SENTIMENTS. MACOMBER

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